

AN
ENQUIRY
INTO THE
EXPEDIENCY AND PROPRIETY
OF
PUBLIC OR SOCIAL WORSHIP:

R
BY GILBERT WAKEFIELD, B.A.
LATE FELLOW OF JESUS-COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years,
I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed on you labour in vain,
PAUL.

*Sed nil dulcius est, bene quam munita tenere
Edita doctrinâ sapientum templa serenâ ;
Despicere undè queas alios, passimque videre
Errare, atque viam palantes quærere vitæ.*

LUCRETIVS.

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AN

ENQUIRY

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EXPEDIENCE AND PROPER

OF

PUBLIC OR SOCIAL WORKS:

BY GEORGE WATKINS, ESQ.

LATE SECRETARY OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.



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MDCCLXXXIII.

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THE author wishes the reader to understand, that he has treated the following subject with all possible brevity ; because his numerous avocations and pursuits would not allow time for a more ample discussion ; because the question seems to lie within narrow limits and to admit of compendious and decisive proof ; and because it would be imprudent, as experience has taught him, to expend much upon the public in this unpopular kind of *theology*. Either the author wants *talents* for these investigations, or his countrymen *zeal* and *taste*.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The author wishes the reader to understand that he has treated the following subject with a possible bias, but his numerous occupations and business would not allow time for more ample discussion. Because the question is one to which no new limits are to be set, of course no new and decisive facts, and he would not be inconsistent, as experience has taught him, to expand much upon the points in the popular kind of writing. Under the same hot sun, and for these investigations, or for country and sea and sky.

AN ENQUIRY, &c.

INTRODUCTION.

OUR best ideas of the SUPREME BEING, whether collected from contemplating the works of the creation, or derived from a speculative consideration of the attributes of an universal creator governor and parent, conspire in convincing us, that all the plans of his providence and all the measures of his administration are directed to the final happiness of mankind. But the various irregularities, which present themselves to our notice on every side, and the scenes of misery and vice, which are exhibited both in the world at large and in the sphere of private life, demonstrate with equal conclusiveness, that this great end is not to be accomplished by any instantaneous and violent efforts of omnipotence, but by the permanent operation of gentle causes; uniformly, steadily, and imperceptibly exerting themselves upon the mind of man, and gradually rectifying the manners of the species. The universal lord deals with us, not as a *master* with his *servant*, but as a *parent* with his *child*. We are sensible of a will and powers of our own; we feel

the gentle constraints of a discipline calculated ultimately to improve our pleasures and advance our welfare ; and we perceive, whilst disorderly individuals are apparently frustrating the schemes of the divine administration, the world at large to be thriving by a regular growth to the maturity of happiness and virtue.

In this general view of the intentions of God and the circumstances of humanity, if we survey the *two* revelations, which are generally allowed by Christians to come from heaven, we shall see the tenour of them conformable to this idea of *gradual* perfection, and consequently analogous to the progress of individual life. An *infancy*, a *youth*, and a *manhood*, are at once discernible in the several stages of religious communication.

To an attentive examiner, informed by experience and by history in the manners of his species, and instructed by philosophy in the composition of the human mind ; the *Jewish* institution will appear admirably calculated for the exigencies of that people, to whom it was dispensed. Accustomed, as the *Israelites* had been for such a series of years, to the contemplation and practice of *gentile* superstition under it's most ignoble state of degradation in *Agypt**; they were obviously unfit for a pure system of mere rational and intellectual religion : and indeed

* Exod. xxxii. 1.---5. Deut. xxxii. 16 and 17.

any scheme of worship, materially different from the tenour of the *Mosaic* ordinances, would have outraged every principle of prudence, suggested by an insight into human life. The *natural* and *moral* systems are correspondent in this respect. The eye, long shut up in darkness, would be destroyed by the sudden glare of day-light. And an attempt at hasty reformation, like an instantaneous transition from intemperance to sobriety*, would defeat it's own purpose and bring inevitable and speedy ruin on the object of it. That primary article of all religion, the *UNITY* of the first cause, and the supreme dominion of

* Το δε σωμα ὄραν, ὅπως ἐστὶ ὡς ἀσθενέστατον καὶ ἀσθενέστατον τῶν σιτιῶν τε ἀφαιρεόντα, καὶ τῶν ποτῶν, οἷσιν εἰσθεὶς χρῆσθαι, κατ' ὀλίγον· ἦν γὰρ μεταβάλλῃ ταχέως τὴν διαίταν, κινδυνεύει καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς μεταβολῆς νεώτερον τι γίνεσθαι ἐν τῷ σώματι. Hippocrates de natura Hominis.

† Οὕτω μὲν ὁ Περτιναξ, ἐπιχειρήσας ἐν ὀλίγῳ πάντα ἀνακαλεσασθαι, ἐτελεύτησεν· οὐδὲ ἐγὼ, καίπερ ἐμπειροτάτος πραγμάτων ὢν, ὅτι ἀδύνατον εἶναι ἄθροα τινα ἀσφαλῶς ἐπανορθοῦσθαι, ἀλλ', εἴπερ τι ἄλλο, καὶ πολιτικὴ καταστάσις καὶ χρόνου καὶ σοφίας χρῆζει. Dion Cassius, lxiii. 10.

“ Let us here admire God's wisdom in our first reformers, who proceeded so moderately in a matter of so great consequence. To reform *all at once*, had been the ready way to reform *nothing at all*. New wine must be gently poured into old bottles, lest the strength of the liquor, advantaged with the violence of the infusion, break the vessel.” Fuller's Church-history, book vii. Compare Matt. ix. 15---18. where the same propriety is enforced by our Saviour.

JEHOVAH throughout the universe, were points at all events to be secured; and were accordingly made the fundamental principles of the *Mosaic* system of faith and practice. But a variety of *ceremonial* performances, such as the *Jews* had long used and revered, were in all reason to be indulged to the gross conceptions of a stubborn, sensual, and unenlightened race of men. Material impressions and manual services were expedient and necessary to occupy the attention and engage the senses of these rude votaries of religion. Considered in this light, the *Levitical* polity, if I mistake not, will be found pregnant with intrinsic wisdom, and the most consummate sagacity: independent of the absolute propriety and suitableness of the ritual injunctions themselves, and of the beauty, the dignity, and the benevolence of the moral code of *Moses*, which is impressed with indubitable marks of the divinity.

From the limit of the legation of *Moses* to the confines of the *Babylonish* captivity, the *infancy* of revealed religion may be computed. During that captivity, and onwards to the appearance of the *Messiah*, the great teachers of the *Jewish* nation were gradually inculcating on their countrymen a purer and more sublime morality, a more unencumbered spiritual devotion. The utter insignificance of ceremonial observances in the eye of the supreme Being, when put in

competition with *refined affections*, with *active benevolence*, and a *holy life*, were maintained in the most explicit language and with the most earnest assiduity. The truly *evangelical* declaration of the prophet *Micah* was the substance of prophetic admonition: *He hath shewed thee, O! man, what is good; and what doth the lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?** And, it is most certain from the writings of their teachers and from historic evidence not to be disputed, the doctrine of *a resurrection from the grave* constituted an article so undisputed in the *Jewish* creed, that a disbelief of it was considered as an *enormity* and a *singularity*, equally peculiar and remarkable with *infidelity* at this day. This period may be termed the *youth* of revelation: *Christianity* was its *manhood* and *maturity*. The stupendous doctrine of redemption from the consequences of *Adam's* transgression, by the achievement of immortality through the medium of the *MESSIAH*; a doctrine, proclaimed, exemplified, and ascertained by the life of the son of God, his sacrifice upon the cross, and his restoration to life on the third day, was inculcated on mankind, amidst a most august display of celestial agency, accompanying this unexampled communication of the deity: the com-

* Micah, vi. 8.

pletion and conclusion, it should seem, of all his religious dispensations to the human race.

But, in my judgement, the same *analogy* and *progression*, which I have endeavoured to point out, with respect to the schemes of revelation at large, are true also of the *Christian* dispensation in it's separate capacity: I mean, that some of the *gospel* institutions were immediately and solely calculated for the *infancy* and the *youth* of it's professors; and many practices*, during this twilight of *Judaism* and *Christianity*, were then prevalent, but not obligatory even in those days, and much less in a future period, on those *Christians*, who had attained a more spiritual apprehension of their religion, and could digest the *strong meat* of men grown up to the *fullness of the stature of Christ*†.

This general idea I shall attempt to enforce by considering *three* institutions, as they are esteemed, of *Christianity*: though my first topic of discussion need not have recourse to this hypothesis for support; having no title, I apprehend, to an injunction, or practice, of *Christ* and his *apostles*. But, if it were an original appendage of the *gospel*, this argument of *progressive prac-*

* The apostles appear to have persevered in their observance of the *Jewish* ritual, and to have associated it, as far as was practicable, with *Christianity*. This is sufficiently evident from their history in the *Acts*.

† Heb. v. 14. Eph. iv. 13.

tical perfection, grounded on the exigencies of the primitive times, the genius of the gospel, and the character of the human mind, would constitute alone, in my estimation, a most powerful argument, when opposed by nothing better than mere *usage* and *prescription*.

The *first* subject*, which I propose to consider is, The *expediency* and *propriety* of *public*, or *social*, worship: and I shall treat of it under the following heads of discussion:

SECTION I.

THE PRACTICE OF OUR SAVIOUR HIMSELF:

FOR, I think, it is allowed by every class of *Christians* without exception, that we are bound to be *imitators of Christ*†; and that *he left us an example, that we should follow his steps*‡.

Upon this question, our only guides are the *evangelists*, who have composed narratives, and, in many respects *circumstantial* narratives, of the life and actions of their master. This is the authority, to which all believers will *bow the knee*: this is the tribunal, by which all our controversies must be awarded. I shall bring forwards

* The other two, A more accurate Account of Baptism, than my former treatise; and, An Enquiry into the Perpetuity of the Lord's Supper, will follow as soon as my avocations and inclination will permit.

† 1 Cor. xi. 1.

‡ 1 Pet. ii. 21.

those passages, that have any relation to this subject, in the order presented to us by the gospels themselves, beginning with the gospel of *St. Matthew*.

And, when Jesus had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and, when the evening was come, he was there alone.*

Our Saviour had just been feeding, by a miraculous supply of provisions, *five thousand men, besides women and children*, who were in a desert place and distressed for food. Whilst their hearts were expanding with gratitude to their benefactor, and their souls wrapt in admiration of this stupendous exertion on their behalf; what a glorious opportunity, one would have thought, was then offered for *social worship* with the multitude! At least all *methodists*, and most *dissenters*†, of our times, would have set about the

* Matt. xiv. 23. compare Mark. vi. 46 and 47.

† Men, who have been educated in the church of England, will find an exercise for all their faith in believing the account of this rigorous discipline even among *dissenters* of our time; most sadly degenerated as they are in this respect from the glorious mortifications of their ancestors. In some *dissenting academies*, as I am credibly informed, the day is ushered in with a prayer of *half an hour*, preceded or followed by a chapter in the Bible be it long or short; then comes the hymn as a finishing appendix to this work of devotion. Before the lecture in divinity, a petition is offered up, something like one of the *collects* in the church-liturgy, to him that *worketh great marvels*; to give the tutor, I presume, *understanding and knowledge*,

pious operation with all imaginable fervour, and have continued their *prayers*, as *Paul* did his *preaching*, till *midnight*; intrepidly encountering the danger of undoing all the benefit of the miracle, by delaying the people till returning hunger importunately demanded a second interference. How different from such fanaticism was the conduct of the son of God! that son, who was admitted into the bosom of his father, to an intimate knowledge of the divine will and counsels! He, as on all other occasions, left the people to the secret impressions and undisturbed impulse of their own mind: *he* consigned them to their *private* meditations on that wonderful event, which could not fail to meliorate their

and the pupil, *patience* and *docility*. The *evening* concludes with a counterpart of the *morning-service*. Besides these petty diurnal exertions for spiritual improvement, the students have private meetings, or *clubs*, to practise themselves in the *gift of prayer*: and each takes alternately a separate province; going through in his course the routine of *ascriptions*, *confessions*, *supplications*, *intercessions*, and every other figure of *theological rhetoric*. But all this is just nothing at all to the painful devotional performances of some private families which beggar every thing that was ever heard of in this way, except the perseverance of *Simeon the pillar-percher*; and would suffuse the cheek of the most rigid *Israelite* with a conscience blush of inferiority. My *nursing-mother* does not owe me many obligations; and therefore I should be uncandid and injurious indeed, if I did not bear her this testimony, that she enjoins and practises no ceremonies in any degree so absurd and contemptible as these.

hearts and influence the conduct, by that gradual and unconstrained process, which is conformable to the uniform dealings of providence with mankind. In the mean time, *Jesus* himself, far from the bustle and inspection of this congregation, retired to offer up his unostentatious devotions to that omnipresent spirit, who *saw in secret*, and *would reward him openly*. The recesses of a mountain and the gloom of night furnished the stage and scenery for the intercessions and supplications of the holy Nazarene. His temple was the universe; his altar the footstool of *Jehovah*; his incense, *silent* communication with the father; and his sanctuary, his own spotless heart.

Then cometh Jesus with the disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto them: Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he went forwards a little, about a stone's cast; and kneeled down and prayed.*

Greater horrors of approaching sufferings, more exquisite agony of apprehension, than our meek and gentle master suffered at this crisis, never agitated the breast of man. According to the prevalent notions of *prayer* and *devotion* in after times, no occasion could call more loudly for sympathising and social ejaculations, than this before us. In the seasons of distress, under

* Matt. xxvi. 36. Mark xiv. 32. Luke xxii. 41.

the pressure of disease, and with the prospect of dissolution, the officious *papist* intrudes himself, like death, called or uncalled*, into the retirements of the sufferer, and inflicts upon him the consolations of religion. In the same spirit, our *protestant papists* assist their votary in making his peace with that Being, who delights in a *willing* service, and has no where promised his rewards to any *professions* of love and gratitude at such a juncture; but will weigh DISINTERESTED ACTION only in the balance. *I was hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink†. No one for saying, Lord! Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he, that doeth the will of my father, which is in heaven‡.*

To the same purpose, in justification of *private prayer* and in discouragement of *social worship*, are the following passages of the life of *Jesus*.

And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed§.

And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray; and continued all night in prayer to God||.

And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him().*

* *Vocatus, et non vocatus, audit.*

HOR.

† Matt. xxv. 35. ‡ Matt. vii. 21.

§ Luke v. 16. || vi. 12. (*) ix. 18.

This last scripture appears to me peculiarly pertinent, and to deserve a minute attention. Our Lord was detached from the multitude; whose tumultuous murmurs indeed, or rude importunities, or unharmonising humours*, might have broken in upon the tranquility and decorum of *united worship*: but his *disciples* were with him; and their society furnished a most commodious juncture for spiritual improvement, by exercising the *gift of prayer* and refining the *devotional taste* forsooth! either in a *free effusion*, or a *preconcerted form*; as the sentiments of these worshippers might lead them either to a coincidence with the practice of our *establishment*, or that of the *dissenters* from it. But observe, reader! the result; and consider with thyself, whether the example be not worthy of imitation: OUR LORD chooses to pray ALONE, at some little distance, it should seem, at the space of *a stone's throw* perhaps, from his friends and favourites! This Saviour of the world had no relish for *public prayer*! Whereas our modern devotees would regard a brother, who should prefer a still communion with God and his own heart, to the vociferation and grimace of their *social worship*, as one, who degraded the character and name of *Christian*. They would discard

* ----- *varius fremor, aut studia in contraria rapti
Diffensus, ut plebe solet.* STAT.

him without scruple, as an infectious and pestilential heretic, from their society; he would be unto them *as a heathen and a publican*. The *heresy*, however, of this outcast, with such authorities to give it countenance, is preferable, in my estimation, to the whole medley of *vain babblings* and noisy shew and frantic gestures and solemn visages of all the *pharisaical* enthusiasts in the universe.

Nor would there be any difficulty in pointing out many other seasons in the life of *Jesus*, as recorded by our *evangelists*, in which *social prayer* might have been reasonably expected, and in after ages would certainly have been practised, with more or less mercy, according to the complexion of the times, upon the suffering assembly. But you will say, This is *presumption* and *hypothesis*? True: and, if this *presumption* and *hypothesis* were accompanied by no arguments, direct, explicit, and not to be eluded, such inferences might be regarded as mere conjecture, of no efficacy in the present question. Give me now in return any thing besides mere gratuitous fancy and superstitious practice;—give me but ONE SINGLE POSITIVE PROOF of the existence of *social worship* among CHRIST and his APOSTLES;—and I retire with shame from the field of contest, and resign the victory. Is it possible for any dispute to be submitted to a more equita-

ble issue*, than this before us? Will ye follow *cust m*, or *scripture*? your *priests*, or *Christ*? I say in the language of the *Israelites* to their brethren: *Consider of it, and speak your minds.*

John in the xviiith chapter of his *gospel*, has given us a longer prayer of *Jesus* to his father; but no mention is made of any invitation to his apostles to join, or *assist*, him in these devotions. And our historian, his favourite disciple, so intimately acquainted with the manners and sentiments and discourses of his divine master, has left not even the slightest memorial respecting him, that I can discover, which will justify any follower of *Jesus* in the continuance of united devotions, either in a family or a congregation. No; this practice seems to be a part of that hay and stubble, which has been laid on the foundation of *Christianity* by officious zealots, to be destroyed by fire.

We are told in various passages by the gospel-writers, that our Lord frequented the *Jewish synagogues*, wherever he came; that he was a constant attendant in the temple, when at *Jerusalem*; that he went into private families on many occasions; and in all these instances, not

* *Desine quaproptèr, novitate exterritus ipsâ,
Despuere ex animo rationem: sed magis acri
Judicio perpende; et, si tibi vera videtur,
Dede manus; aut, si falsa est, accingere contrâ.*

to *pray*, (observe that, reader!) but for the *sole* purpose of promoting, by incidental admonition and pious lessons, the substantial improvement of his hearers, in the knowledge and practice of genuine *spiritual* benevolent religion; a religion, not consisting of *outward exhibitions*, but of *inward influence*; not on the honour of the *lips*, but the aspirations of the *heart*; not in the vain oblations of *ceremonial* homage, but in the sacrifice of the WHOLE MAN, body and spirit, on the altar of the divine will; a religion, consisting, in short, of a complete dedication of our thoughts, faculties, and actions, through every moment of existence, to GOD'S SERVICE. Yes: the captain of our salvation was accustomed both to *walk*, and *teach*, and *heal the sick*, and *dispute*, and *preach the gospel**, but never PRAYED, in the *temple*. We are told of his *instructions* and *admonitions* in their *synagogues* and *houses*†, but not a syllable of *joint prayer*, or *social worship*.—And what shall we say to these things? Is it possible, that *realities* of this important nature could have *escaped the observation* of these eye-witnesses of the life and actions of our Saviour; these constant companions of his journeys, of his public appearances, and his retirements? Or, on the

* Matt. xxi. 14. Mark xi. 27. Luke ii. 46. xix. xx. 1. xxi. 3.

†. Matt. iv. 23. ix. 35. xiii. 3, 4. Mark iii. 1. Luke iv. 15, 16. x. 39. and many other passages in all the gospels.

other hand, is it probable, that the *evangelists* should *decline* recording such usages of their master for our benefit? Or can any other supposition be devised to extricate the patron of *social worship* from this embarrassing dilemma? His cause demands a more successful investigation, a more fertile fancy, and a happier ingenuity, than mine.

SECTION II.

OF THE PRECEPTS OF OUR SAVIOUR.

IN the next place, let us take a view of the *precepts* of our Lord, relating to this subject: which may be ranked under *two* heads. 1. Such as *directly* and *literally* prove *public worship* to be unauthorised by *Christianity*, and inconsistent with it: and 2. Such as by inevitable *inference* disprove and condemn this practice.

1. - We will exhibit the *direct evidences* upon this point.

And, when thou prayest, be not as the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men: verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy father, who is in secret; and thy father, who seeth in secret, will reward thee openly.*

Matt. vi. 5 and 6.

To the lover of truth, who wishes to adjust his conduct by the standard of the gospel, this emphatic passage will appear of inestimable value, and indisputable as demonstration. The whole weight of the question might be securely rested on this adamant pillar: and we may defy either the subtleties of argument to undermine it's base, or the force of evidence to throw it down. Our divine master is here introduced as directing his disciples, in the clearest and most unequivocal declaration, that language can convey, upon the very point of duty, that occupies our enquiries. What exception can be imagined to testimony like this?

Even the use of *solitary prayer* in the *synagogue* or any *public assembly* of men, is not obscurely disapproved by this text; because the reason of disapprobation, here alledged against those *Jewish hypocrites*, is inseparable from the circumstances of the case: such a mode of *prayer* must ALWAYS of necessity carry an appearance of *ostentation* with it. And more notoriously must this effect take place, in the devotions of *social worshippers*. But, if inferences drawn from the former verse of this quotation be liable to dispute, the injunctions of the latter at least admit of no evasion: they are universally intelligible, and irresistibly convincing. The witness of *our prayers*, according to the command of our great instructor, is not to be the *congregation of Chris-*

tians, but the invifible father of mankind. The theatre of *our* devotions muft not be the *chapel*, the *church*, or the *cathedral*; tumultuous with the *busy hum* of men: but the fecrecy and filence of the *clofet*. It is not, *Jefus* tells us, the duty of an humble *Chriftian*, by ringing his bell or blowing his horn, to invite multitudes of fpectators to ftimulate the fervour and to testify the patience of his devotions; *he* is not expected to fhew his homage to the ruler of the univerfe, as we pay our refpect to earthly potentates, in crouds and pomp and tumult:—we muft *fhut the door* even of our *clofet*, that no eye, fo much as of our own houfhould, may obtrude upon the tranquility of our meditations, and no vanity be gratified by the curious obfervance of an admiring brother. Our concern is with God only. Let his infpection be our applaufe; and our recompence, his approbation. The features of refignation, unfeen by man, will be faithfully marked by his eye: the fecret whifper, the retired figh, unheard in the congregation, will vibrate on his ear, and be regiftered in the volume of his remembrance, to testify in our favour before men and angels, when the formalities and fopperies of *ceremonial worfhip* are fwept into oblivion.

Jefus faith unto her: Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye fhall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerufalem, worfhip the father.

But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the father in spirit and in truth: for the father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit; and they, that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

If we attend merely to the literal acceptation of the former verse, it must be allowed that the *two temples* of the *Jews* and *Samaritans* were alone intended by our Saviour: but, when the latter verse also is taken into consideration, the abolition of all *temple worship*, that is, of all *public devotion*, and, by fair inference, every species of *ceremonial religion*, is spoken of, as designed to take place at some period not long subsequent to the time of this conference with the woman of *Samaria*. God was providing for himself, under the new dispensation of the *Messiah*, a collection of *worshippers* better suited to the spirituality of his own nature, than the *Jews* or the *Samaritans*; of whom the latter are censured as mistaken in their pretensions, and the former as scrupulously occupied in the superstitious discharge of a laborious and multifarious ceremonial. In opposition to the *Samaritans*, the affections of the new subjects of *Jehovah* were to be fixed on a *true* object, exhibited in his proper character, as the universal benevolent parent of mankind: and again, in opposition to the *Jews*, the disciples of

* John iv. 21, 23, 24.

Jesus were to transfer their homage from the *forms* and *shadows* of godliness to the *substance*; from external offices to inward piety; from purifications by water, and sacrifices, and oblations, to a rational and mental devotion—to the uniform consecration of the thoughts and affections, the heart and soul, to the will of it's creator. This is the worship, which is most acceptable to God; and this must be paid, to the relinquishment of every other, by those, who wish to accomplish our Saviour's prediction, and to become the TRUE WORSHIPPERS of the father.

From this emphatical declaration of our master, than which nothing more decisive upon the present argument can be imagined, I pass on to the consideration of

2. The *indirect* evidence upon this question.

In reference to the *manner*, in which *public worship* is conducted among many sects of *Christians*, the following assertion of our lord concerning the *easiness* of his religion, is by no means inapplicable:

My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

Every man must be left to his own judgement; but, for myself, I feel no difficulty in acknowledging, that the length and frequency of *family* and *public devotions* with some denominations, and particularly the majority of the *dissenters*, would

* Matt. xi. 30.

be to me a most irksome slavery, an intolerable burden. With dispositions as serious, with a love of virtue as ardent, with a faith as sincere, as actuates any devotee in *Christendom*, I yawned at long prayers in my childhood, I slumbered over them in my maturer years: happy that I was not born a son of the *circumcision*, nor a nursling of the mother of the saints,

Now can these practices be at all conformable to the genius of *Christianity*, that introduce the incumbrances of *Judaism* and *Popery* again? What then is become of the *spiritual* worship of the gospel; and where is that *liberty*, with which *Christ* hath made us free, if we must entangle ourselves once more with a yoke of bondage? * Generally speaking, what is conducive to the religious welfare of one description of men, would be equally beneficial to another: but the business of human life must be suspended, and the world would languish in supineness, and relapse to barbarism, if that portion of time were deducted from useful occupations and honourable pursuits, which some of the *clerical* fraternity and other members of our *cathedrals* (some, I say; for much the greater part dispense with these formalities) misemploy in going backwards and forwards three times a day to *public worship*. Envious indeed must that man be, who can grudge the *labouring*

* Gal. v. 1.

clergy, as the humility of their brother Dr. Horsley styles them, the little emoluments of their stations, accompanied by such mortification and drudgery as this. In them is that saying true: One (the CURATE) soweth; and another (the RECTOR) reapeth,*

But I say unto you, that in this place is one greater than the temple.

The son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day†.

Slender must his acquaintance be with the writings of the *New Testament*, who has not observed the indirect and incidental manner, in which our Lord delivers some of his most important precepts; leaving his suggestions to their uninfluenced impressions on the docility of his hearers. He made his appeal to the candid, and teachable, and undepraved mind; never earnest in soliciting the notice of men whose immoral lives, or untoward dispositions, disallowed an unbiassed contemplation of the truth. *Who so hath ears to hear, let him hear.* Now, from an attention to this striking peculiarity of our divine preceptor, we may reasonably conclude, that the passages above quoted, convey a tacit intimation of his *intentions* also; and were designed, not only to assure us of the *superiority* of the *Christian* revelation to the *Jewish* ritual, but to intimate

* John iv. 37.

† Matt. xii. 6, 8.

the utter insignificance of the *temple* and the *sabbath* under the dispensation of the gospel; to pronounce the entire dispersion of *temple* rites, and *sabbatical* institutions, by the *bright presence* and energetic influence of *Christianity*, like mists before the sun. *All things are become new in Christ**: so that the *temple* and it's *services*, the *sabbath* and it's *social worship*, are now no more: they are annihilated by *the captain of our salvation*, who hath rescued us from this bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God†.

Alas! for you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: therefore ye shall receive the greater punishment‡.

This expostulation does not necessarily involve, we own, an absolute censure of these *long prayers* of the *pharisees*, here specified: but, if we reflect on other parts of the conduct of our Lord, if we observe the *short* formulary, which he himself laid down as the standard of our devotions, and the brevity with which he urged his own petition, in a most agonising moment, *Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!* if we take, I say, all these considerations into our account, it must be thought highly probable

* 2 Cor. v. 17.

† Rom. viii. 21.

‡ Matt. xxiii. 14.

even from *this* passage, that our Lord designed to express his *disapprobation* of LONG PRAYERS. But this conclusion becomes still more reasonable, when we observe also, how, in a former discourse to his disciples, he cautioned them not to use *vain repetitions* in their *prayers* after the manner of the *heathen*; and at the same time reflect, that *long prayers* are scarcely practicable without some of that idle and babbling tautology so explicitly forbidden. What, for instance, can fly more directly in the face of this prohibition, than the *Liturgy* of the *church* of *England*? The *Lord's prayer* is repeated with such incessant volubility, that neither priest nor people can possibly summon their faculties to a distinct apprehension of each petition at every revolution; not to mention, how often it is gabbled over in a manner unspeakably offensive to every hearer, who has not lost, through these shocking habits, a proper sense of that awful veneration, with which a defenceless dependent creature should approach the footstool of omnipotence. If a stranger, unaccustomed to such a form of worship, should enter the *church* during a repetition of the prayer in question, were he versed in *classic* letters, he would fancy himself transported to some *heathen* temple, where the enthusiastic votaries were celebrating the orgies of the deity: or, if *Hebrew* learning had been his favourite pursuit, his imagination would instantly convey

him to *Samarita*, amidst the vociferations of the *four hundred and fifty* prophets; *O ! Baal, hear us ! O ! Baal, hear us !*—Some other repetitions of the *Liturgy*, as the *Gloria Patri* for example, however *judicious* and *scriptural* it may be in itself, is a most shameful violation of our Lord's direction; a direction, no more regarded in these instances, than a command of *Mahomet*, or a maxim of *Confucius*. So has our church learned *Christ* !

More passages of scripture might be brought with great propriety in establishment of the proposition now before us; but is it requisite to dwell with so much scruple on less obvious arguments, when others have been adduced, so pointed, unequivocal, and pertinent? Nor, on the other hand, are the objections, which may be advanced in opposition to the general conclusion of such a magnitude as to render a long discussion necessary. What texts appear to me not unlikely to be esteemed unfavourable to my conclusion, shall now be presented to the reader.

SECTION III.

OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

THE address in the *Lord's prayer*, *our father*, and not *my father*, may seem to imply a *society* of *worshippers*, uniting in the petitions of that formula of devotion. But this argument will

appear of no weight, if we reflect, that the capital precept of *Christianity* is UNIVERSAL BENEVOLENCE; and that the whole tenour and spirit of this religion, in which there is *neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free*, no distinction of sect, nation or profession, before God,—inculcates an idea of the perfect equality of all mankind, as the offspring of one common parent, and labours to inspire us with a sympathetic interest in the welfare of each other. How then can a professor of this *disinterested comprehensive* system, expressly commanded, as he is, to *look not on his own things only, but on the things of others**;—the sum and substance of whose religion is, *to love his neighbour as himself†*;—how shall such a man, I say, under these circumstances, offer up even his *private* devotions but as *one* amongst *many children* in the family of the father of the universe? This worshipper, under the influence of the expanded philanthropy of the gospel, associated with all his actions and invigorating every emotion of his soul; this worshipper, I say, shut up indeed as to the body in a closet, but expatiating in idea among all the families of the earth; will habitually cry out, not *MY father*, but *OUR father!* not *MY God*, but *OUR God!*

Another objection may possibly be raised from Matt. xviii. 20.

* Phil. ii. 4.

† Matt. xxii. 39.

For, where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

But, let me ask, can *two or three* be assembled in the name of God, that is, I presume, to promote his glory and the purposes of providence, on no other occasion but that of *public worship*? Is human happiness, the grand object of the divine administration, to be promoted no where but in a *church or chapel*; and by no means, but the united noises of a *parson*, and his *clerk*, and the *congregation*? Suppose now, for example, there should exist in any country, a *king*, totally unconcerned for the real honour and welfare of his people, solely occupied in gratifying his own humours and aggrandising himself and family, whilst his subjects are sinking beneath the pressure of accumulated burdens;—suppose also, that this *king* is encompassed by favourites, insolent arbitrary and unfeeling, and guided by ministers, whose public lives are one uniform series of practical political depravity: in this case, should any number of people meet in consultation upon the means of redressing these grievances, and stopping this career of wickedness;—will any man venture to assert, that such patriots are not as effectually and truly assembled in the name of that God, who has appointed *governours* only for the good* of the *governed*; as any congregation

* Rom. xiii. 4.

whatever can be for the purposes of *public worship*? I think not.

I might quote too Luke iii. 21. *Jesus also being baptised and praying*: but this passage, and whatever others there may be at all resembling it, would be interpreted as infering *social prayer*, rather than *private* and *mental*, without any pretence imaginable. Besides, should this, or any parallel text, which I may have either undesignedly overlooked, or disregarded as unimportant, appear to the reader of consequence in the present question; he will do well in turn to consider the evidences on the other side, and to balance his suspicions against the direct and plain authorities, which have been before exhibited: and decide accordingly.

And now, after this detail, I reasonably appeal to the patrons of *social worship* to decide, whether this practice be indeed sufficiently authorised by the mere *silence* of the scriptures? Whether a duty of such magnitude would have been left to the *discretion* of mankind, and appear in the world only as a mere *political institution*, not essentially connected with *Christianity*, nor enjoined by it? Yes; if this usage be in truth so very conducive, as it is thought, to the interests of religion, and so inseparable an appendage of it, I should be glad, if any advocate could assign me a reason tolerably satisfactory,

why our Saviour should omit a POSITIVE INJUNCTION of this great duty, or prescribe no regulations for the conduct of it? This provision on his part would certainly have contributed in a most eminent manner to the peace and welfare of the church: for the schisms, which have flowed in upon society from this source, abundantly demonstrate the wisdom of some decisive directions from the founder of our faith for the guidance of his followers. Our own history alone can inform us of the lives, which have been borne away, and the comforts, that have been desolated, by this overwhelming inundation. Diffension and animosity are to this hour the legitimate and thriving progeny of the same prolific parent. Ignorance, imagination and caprice, give full scope to all their obliquities, for want of some acknowledged standard, to which their fancies might be referred. Not only the *substance* itself, but *modes* and *forms* have been made the subject of controversy, rancour, and separation. One prefers the white linen vestment, as emblematical, perhaps, of the righteousness of the saints*, in the celebration of *public worship*: another regards a surplice with as much complacency and affection†, as a Jew, or Mahometan, a herd of swine.—Other differ-

* Revel. xix. 8.

† *Alter Miletæ textam, cara pejus et angui,*
Vitabit chlamydem. HOR.

ences of sentiment in these external appendages might be easily pointed out, were we disposed to mix ridicule with so grave a subject; for I would defy the most philosophic gravity of face to withhold a smile at the recital of such solemn puerilities, unless the sentiments of philanthropic commiseration for the weaknesses of poor human nature, and the pang of sorrow at this degradation of his species, should overpower the propensity to merriment, and dissolve in tears.—Again; *this* sect is zealous for *stated forms* of prayer, adapted to any people, to every place and to all emergencies; as most becoming that decorum and preparation, with which a *worm* should approach the throne of the almighty: *this* prefers an extemporaneous effusion, as best consulting the unrestrained operations of the spirit. But unfortunately, in this latter case, the effect is not so correspondent to the nature of the expected visitant, as to the faculties of the exhibitioner: hence the hearer, in many instances, is left at the mercy of a stammering, injudicious, and unlearned orator; and not unfrequently, what should be the language, if not of *inspiration*, at least of *truth* and *soberness*, proves little better than devout blasphemy in the name of the Lord. A *third* differs equally from both these descriptions of *social devotees*, and awaits in reverential taciturnity the sudden and spontaneous illapses of celestial illumination; and, with no *less* osten-

tation than his neighbours, and more absurdity, groans, and swells, and quakes, and prays, as *the spirit gives him utterance*. Oh! for a text of union to cement these discordant materials into one indissoluble mass; and incorporate in the same spiritual edifice of unanimity and love, the *episcopalian*, the *non-conformist*, and the *quaker*! For want of such an attractive principle to counteract the fugitive propensity of these reluctant bodies, no banquet ever exhibited more discordancy of taste even in the most capricious guests.

One likes the pheasant's wing, and one the leg;

The vulgar boil, the learned roast, an egg:

Hard task to hit the palate of such guests!

When Oldfield loves, what Dartineuf detests.

SECTION IV.

ON THE PRACTICE OF THE APOSTLES.

NOR, when we turn our attention to the practice of the apostles, will the scriptures furnish any information, in my opinion, sufficient to authorise the custom of *public worship*, in opposition to the conduct and directions of our Saviour, who alone is the *master* and *guide** of *Christians*. All that my researches have been

* Matt. xxiii. 8 and 10.

*Tu pater, et rerum inventor! tu patria nobis
Suppeditas praecepta.*

LUCRET.

able to discover relative to this subject, is either wholly consistent with *private worship*, or from the peculiarity of it's circumstances, or it's dissimilarity to what is now called *social worship*, cannot with any cogency, or shew of reason, be pressed into the service of the cause, which I am combating.

We are told by Luke*, that *the apostles were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God*. If each man went, like the *pharisee* and the *publican* in the parable, to make his *separate* oblation of praise and gratitude, and even of *prayer*, which yet is not mentioned; what has this to do with the *public worship* of our days?

The apostles *prayed* at the election of a new associate in the room of Judas†. Will an address to the supreme Being, at so extraordinary a juncture, of *half a minute long*, be deemed by any man an adequate authority for the establishment of *social prayer*, *perpetually* recurring, on no *particular urgency* of occasion, and *long enough* to tire the most unrelenting patience? Indeed, the fact is, you see nothing at such places, with a few exceptions, but lolling, and gaping, and stretching, and sleeping, and every additional symptom of weariness, independent of bowings and greetings and salutations, even among otherwise respectable and virtuous people: a clear

* C. xxiv. v. 53.

† Acts i. 24.

demonstration in my mind, that such an usage is by no means calculated for at least the generality of mankind. And it is a most pleasing consideration to the lover of the gospel, that this rule of life prescribes no practices, but what experience and philosophy unite in proving to be both salutary in themselves and consonant to the unimpaired character of the mind of man.—But we are, perhaps, too liberal in our concessions upon the passage of scripture above quoted. It is no absurd supposition, and one abundantly defensible from other writers, that the *evangelical* historian means only to state the *general sentiments* of the apostles at that time, and the *purport* of the prayer, which they *individually* presented to the almighty.

The same observations are applicable without reserve to the other instances specified below*. My ideas do not at all interfere with expressions of *praise* and *gratitude* in any circumstances, when the occasion may call them forth; but what has this to do with *social worship* at *church* or *chapel*? The apostles, in all probability, *prayed*, for the most part, in private, after the example and direction of their master†; and had no custom at all similar to modern *prayer* in a crowded congregation. When *they* went into the syna-

* Acts ii. 42. iii. 1. iv. 24. vi. 6. x. 2. xiii. 3.

† Acts x. 9.

gogues, they acted in conformity to the established usage of their countrymen: they read and expounded the scriptures, they taught the people, and disputed with the scribes*. Excellent edifying practices! and every man, who takes upon himself the name of *Christ*, and professes obedience to the laws of the gospel, should have the resolution and uprightness to forsake his blind guides to follow the apostles; those more perfect examples of *Christian* discipline and doctrine. How shall we otherwise escape the application of that awful and pertinent appeal? *Why call ye me Lord! Lord! and do not the things, which I say†?*

But, granting, for the sake of argument, that public worship, like our's at this day, was customary among the apostles; would this be a sufficient authority for us, without the example and against the injunctions of their master? What might be very proper in the infancy of the gospel, may be in no wise necessary at a more advanced period of *Christianity*. Who does not know, how frequently even the apostles were reprov'd for their gross and inadequate apprehensions of the nature of the Messiah and the quality of his dispensation? Who has not read, that fasting‡ and circumcision§, and all the ceremonies of the

* Luke iv. 16, 17. Acts ix. 20. xiii. 5, 14, 15, 24. xiv. 1. xvii. 1, 2. xviii. 4.

† Luke vi. 46. ‡ Acts x. 30. xiii. 2, 3. § Acts xvi. 3.

Jewish ritual were continued by the apostles, whilst the temple stood? But have our advocates for *social worship* any inclination to be *CIRCUMCISED*? And is *FASTING* a *favourite* discipline of their religion?

I do not pretend to very satisfactory acquaintance upon the subject of *Jewish* devotion, and therefore, if wrong, will gladly accept of more accurate information; but I find no circumstances in the scripture concerning this people, that wear any aspect of *public worship*, as we conduct it; nor yet from an attendance at their synagogues in this country. The object of the *Jews* in their assemblies, seems to be, merely to recite the scriptures in the way of praise and thanksgiving*, and to sing hymns, after the custom of the first *Christians*, mentioned by *Pliny* in his epistles, in honour of the supreme Being. When the high priest makes a *prayer*, it is to *himself*: the congregation neither hear him, nor seem desirous of hearing him, nor at all disposed to join in his petitions. As far as I can judge, the *prayer* is similar to that mentioned in Num. x. 35. and correspondent to the *blessing* in the church of *England*, pronounced by the *bishop*, if present, or, in his absence, by the *priest*: which seems liable to no exception.

It is neither consistent with my avocations, nor

* Deut. xxxi. 11.

indeed necessary in itself, or I might point out the gross improprieties, and even wickedness, which mixes itself in our public forms of devotion, and in the celebration of divine worship among most, if not all, denominations of *Christians*. The language of true evangelical resignation should ever be modelled by the standard of our Saviour's own words, with respect to all the future events of life; *Nevertheless, O! father! not my will, but thine be done!* Whereas modern supplicants enter upon a long enumeration of all their wants with the utmost familiarity, and implore favours utterly inconsistent with that state of *trial*, in which men are placed: as if the supreme Being were not acquainted with the proper means of our real happiness, or knew not our wants, before we utter them. How infinitely preferable to the teasing verbosity of the supplicants of these days is the compendious ejaculation of the contrite publican! *God be merciful to me a sinner!* Nay, had I no other alternative, give me *heathenish devotion* in preference to such *Christian superstition* as their's:

ΖΕΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥ, ΤΑ ΜΕΝ ΕΣΘΛΑ ΚΑΙ ΕΥΧΟΜΕΝΟΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΕΥΝΤΟΙΣ
ΑΜΗΝ ΔΙΔΟΥ· ΤΑ ΔΕ ΔΕΙΝΑ ΚΑΙ ΕΥΧΟΜΕΝΟΙΣ ΑΠΑΛΕΞΕΙΝ.

Ask'd or unask'd give good, almighty king!

And ill, unknowingly implor'd, avert.

Where is the passage of scripture, which gives me authority to pray for *health*, (to single out this instance from among others) in that unqualified

manner, with which such petitions are *often* urged on the ear of the Almighty? *Sickness*, for any thing that I can foresee, may prove ultimately the greatest of blessings, by exercising and refining the most important affections of the heart; and *health* may not improbably issue in the ruin of my happiness. Let us be contented to consign the administration of the universe to the head and hand, which have the wisdom to contrive, and the strength to execute, all their gracious purposes to every part of their creatoin. *The Lord reigneth: let the people tremble*. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few†.*

CONCLUSION.

WHAT shall we say to these things? And what is our general conclusion from them? If we hesitate, let us listen to the voice of our best instructor; and press his words again and again on our meditation: *The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the father. The true worshippers shall worship the father in spirit and in truth; for the father seeketh such to worship him‡. All forms, all ceremonies, all external observances of reli-*

* Psalm xcix. 1.

† Eccles. v. 2.

‡ John iv. 21, 23.

gion whatever—all ostentatious exhibitions of piety and devotion, appear not only irreconcilable to the true character of *Christianity*, but are immediately calculated to counteract it's genuine effects. For these visible and material services have a tendency, inseparable from their nature, and extremely operative on feeble minds, to transfer devotion to mere *semblances* from the *life* and *heart*; to inculcate a persuasion, never to be done away, whilst humanity is unchanged, that *outward performances* may atone for *immorality*; that something, besides inward holiness and active benevolence, can recommend us to the favour of that God, *who looketh not on the outward appearance, but on the heart**. Such *Christians* are but *Israelites* still with a mere change of name: and have undergone no more than the transformation so happily described by the unexampled urbanity of our poet:

*A Peter's keys a christen'd Jove adorn,
And Pan to Moses lends his golden horn.*

The demure hypocrite, who passes *six* days in the habitual disregard of God and goodness, on the *seventh* day, smites his breast, lifts up his hand and eye in all the mimicry of devotion; and returns, after this dispensing propitiation of *long prayers* and *gesticulation*, with additional

* 1. Sam. xvi. 7.

vigour to his impurities*. Away with these wretched remains of barbarity and *Judaism*! Away with these *beggarly elements* from the profession of true *Christians*! How long are we to be nurtured, like babes, with the *milk* only of the gospel? In vain have we hailed the rising of the *sun of righteousness*, if we continue walking in the night of infant superstition, or in the malignant twilight of immature and unreformed *Christianity*. Let us, the *spiritual* worshippers of the UNIVERSAL SPIRIT! have no more fellowship with these dangerous and unfruitful practices, the produce of gross conceptions, uninitiated in the mysteries of the gospel, and exchanging the vital warmth of *piety* for the fever of *fanaticism*. *We were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord. Let us walk as children of the light*†. We also will sanctify the *sabbaths* of *Jehovah* with a veneration rigorously scrupulous, as the most merciful institution ever devised for the more unfortunate of our own species and the miserable brute-creation; in which the labourer ceases from his toil, and our *beast* reposes as well as we. OUR

* Such *sabbatical Christians* remind one of *Martial's Gellia* :

Amisum non flet, cum sola est Gellia, patrem :

Si quis adest, iussæ profluent lachrymæ.

Non dolet hic, quisquis laudari, Gellia, quærit ;

Ille dolet vere, qui sine teste dolet.

† Eph. v. 8.

sabbaths also shall be kept; but not with the *leaven* of hypocritical formalities and the parade of misguided superstition, in praying for *calamities* and in deprecating *blessings*; but in studying the volume of the revealed will of God with unleavened affections, and a *single eye*; in expounding the *wonders* of the divine law to our *poor* and unlearned brethren; for whom *Christ* also, in his generation, *preached the gospel**. Thus shall we become *fellow-labourers* in the same vineyard with *Christ* and with *God*; and by the true means, infinitely more than by *prayers*, *baptisms*, and *sacraments*, accelerate the general reformation of mankind; an achievement to be accomplished by this process only. But what are the necessities of the poor to those elevated in *ecclesiastical* preferments? heights from which inferior mortals *shew scarce so gross as beetles*. The tuition of the flock is committed to the *curate*: *in the day the drought consumes him, and the frost by night*†: whilst the reposing *rector*, like *Potiphar* of *Ægypt*‡, (such confidence does the good man place in the fidelity of his substitute!) *knoweth not aught he hath, save the bread, which he doth eat*; and the golden fleece, which is shorn in full measure into his lap.—But I am launching unawares into too wide an ocean: I will bring my little bark to land, and inscribe the tablet

* Matt. x. 1. 5.

† Gen. xxxi. 40.

‡ Geo. xxxix. 6.

Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood; not for FILTHY LUCRE, but of a READY MIND: that, when the chief shepherd shall appear, ye may receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

I cannot conclude, however, without earnestly recommending this awful charge to the consideration of all the lovers of *long prayers* and *public worship*; to the *formalists* of every denomination, whether *churchmen* or *dissenters*, who have undertaken to preach the gospel and to teach others. They will do well to examine how far their *present* practices are calculated to execute this injunction of their master; and whether their *devotional services* are not in reality as *antichristian*, that is, as opposite to the true spirit of the gospel, as any thing condemned by *Protestants* in *Popery*, or by the *Unitarian Dissenters*, as they call themselves, in the *church of England*. It much behoves those, who are so free in their censures of others, to consider, whether their own conduct be not in reality liable to *more* exception, in proportion to their louder pretences to liberality, and knowledge, and a love of truth.

FINIS.

ERRATUM.

Add to the bottom of page 40,—with these characters of heaven:

PUBLIC WORSHIP.

Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased
with his own blood; not for filthy lucre, but
of a ready mind: that, when the chief Shepherd
shall appear, ye may receive a crown of glory that
fadeth not away.

I cannot conclude, however, without earnestly
recommending this awful charge to the con-
sideration of all the lovers of long, peace, and
unity; to the members of every dis-
tinction, whether laymen or ministers, who
have undertaken to preach the gospel, and to
teach others. They will do well to examine
how far their own practices are calculated to
execute this injunction of their master; and
whether their doctrinal services are not in reality
as reprehensible, if not as reprehensible, to the
spirit of the gospel, as the practices condemned by
Prophets in Popery, the Eastern Dispensation.
They, as they call themselves, in the church of
England. It marks beyond those who are so
free in their censures of others, in considering
whether their own conduct be not in reality
liable to more exception, in proportion to their
higher pretences to liberty, and knowledge,
and a love of truth.



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